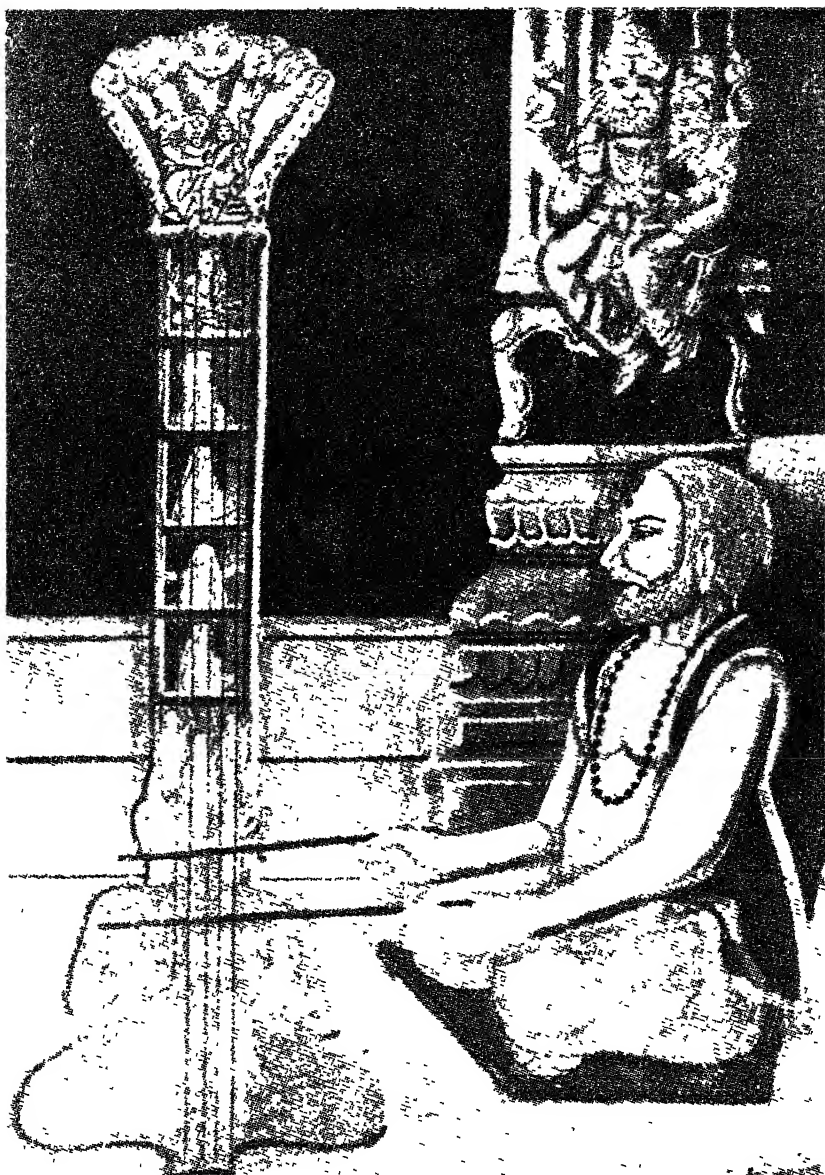


# JAGANNATH DASA

(HIS LIFE AND WORKS)



KESHAV M. MUTALIK

# THE GREAT YOGESWARA YAGNAVALKYA



V. JALAJA SAKTHIDASAN, M.A., M.Ed.

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HIS LIFE AND WORKS

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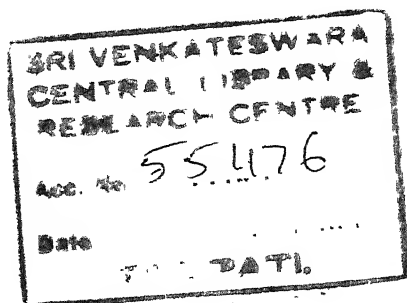
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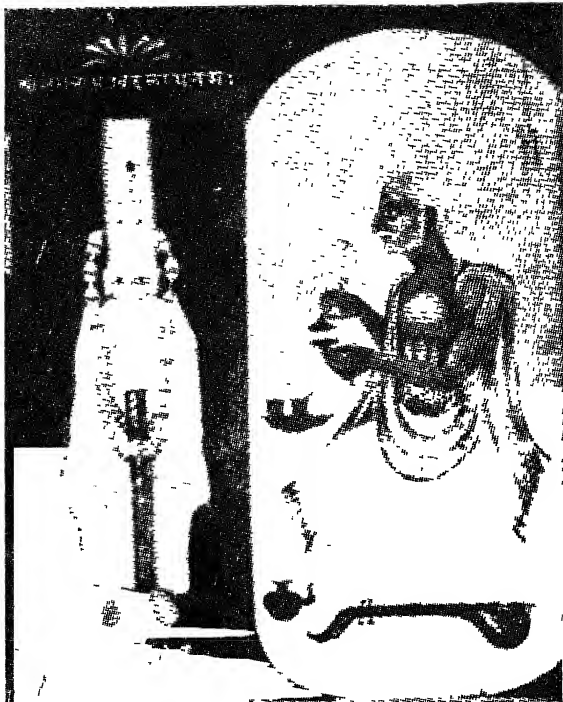
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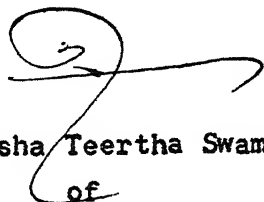


JAGANNATHADASARU

# THE SWAMIJI BLESSES

Here is a biography of a great Composer-saint. This saint started his life with a deep study of Vedantic Scriptures. He acquired profound knowledge in Sanskrit literature and Madhva philosophy. His name is Jagannath Dasa. He came under the influence of the realised souls like Vijayadasa and Gopaladasa who were far more advanced in spirituality without formal education. Jagannath Dasa then realised the futility of bookish knowledge devoid of spiritual experience. Thereafter Jagannath Dasa spent the rest of his life in the persuance of the path of devotion to Lord Hari. He composed great poems in praise of the Lord in his numerous manifestations. The magnum opus, *Harikathamruta Sara* he wrote at the age of eighty. This great work on vedantic philosophy, in vernacular, is referred to by scholars even today to conclusively decide the subtle features of Madhva philosophy.

Dr. K. M. Mutalik, a retired professor of English, a pilgrim on the path of spirituality, has successfully narrated the life-history of this great saint Sri Jagannath Dasa, in chaste English. He has even translated a few verses of this saint in English in verse form. The book can be a guide and inspiration to all who want to study devotional literature and mysticism.



Vibudhesha Teertha Swamiji  
of

July 25, 1990.

Admar Mutt, Udupi.



# INTRODUCTION

I was very young then, may be ten or eleven. I was in the Primary School and was eagerly expecting to join the Secondary School. My father, who retired as Tahasildar or, known then as Mamalatdar, was an intensely religious man. He did not visit a play, a movie or a dance programme. He was engaging himself in singing the praise of God. Father did not possess a sweet voice but, with the God-given vocal instrument, he used to recite Sanskrit and Kannada *Shlokas* and *Bhajans*. Sometimes Kabir, Tukaram, Namdeo appeared in his prayer repertoire. Father was a devout Dvaitin and belonged to Rayara Math or Shri Raghavendra Swamy Math. Early morning he opened his eyes into his palms and uttered Sanskrit *Shlokas* and then used to get up. While rising also, he repeated either the fifteenth canto of the Geeta (ऊर्ध्वमूलमधः शाखम्) or some of Purandara Dasa's songs.

Mother had a melodious voice and used to sing with father as an able accompanist. It was she who created in me interest in music. After singing Purandara Dasa's songs mother often sang "Kailasa Vasa Gaurisha Isha" an excellent prayer of Lord Shiva and Vishnu. I was much impressed by all the songs.

The one thing that has remained with me even now is father's recital of *Harikathamruta Sara*. It is a quintessence of Madhva philosophy, lucidly and elegantly written by Jagannath Dasa. I still remember the famous lines "Harikathamruta Sara Gurugala karunadinda panitu peluve, parame bhagawadbhakta ridanadaradi keluvudu." Later, when I went to college and started working, I remembered the lines but did not bother to read the *magnum opus*, *Harikathamruta Sara* nor did I bother to read about the author, Jagannath Dasa. His songs were rarely recited and he did not arrest my mind as much as Purandara Dasa. Yet, the

opening lines of *Harikatha* were deeply ingrained in my mind.

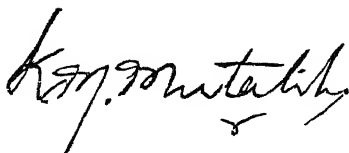
My sister carried forward father's tradition of reciting *Harikatha* and once or twice asked me meanings of some words in it. I pleaded ignorance and excused myself. I did not carry a deep impression of the Dasa. This was perhaps because of my preoccupation with my job routine and mundane work. By nature I am of a philosophic bent of mind. When very young, I used to spend at least an hour in worshipping god. I had my personal prayerbook and rosary. But later years deviated me from my simple religious living to a so-called sophisticated or urbanised life. I was drawn more towards the routine non-academic and non-scholastic activities. Later, administrative positions removed from me whatever little interest I had for the saints, Dasas and their writings. I was in the midst of files, proposals and replies to Governmental letters. The teaching of Business Communication reinforced my non-interest in the areas of knowledge and philosophy.

It was at this time my wife suddenly died and left me completely shaken, broken and uprooted. The shock left me tottering and made me morose, not willing to share anyone's company. Wife could not come back. How could she? I could not end the journey on the earth to reach her. Gradually I had to find a solution, an acceptance of the existing situation and to make the best of it. My son got married and the arrival of a daughter-in-law brought someone to take care of the household and bring cheer in the otherwise dissipated life. We once went to listen to Pandit Bhimsen Joshi's "Santa Wani", a musical extravaganza of Bhajans and prayers. He sang the compositions of Tukaram, Namdeo and others. Additionally, he sang "Hari Bhajere Mado Nirantara" in Kannada. Then he enchanted me by Jagannath Dasa's "Shri Niketana, palaya mam" which enthralled me instantaneously and plummeted me into the world of Jagannath Dasa. I repeated the song while going back home in a taxi. I found out the exact words of the song after borrowing a book from a friend. I told my daughter-in-law, "If you give birth to a son, I will name him Jagannath Dasa". The song had such a marvellous appeal for me. I have heard several of Pandit

Joshi's songs and those of other musicians as well. But the Jagannath Dasa song had an ethereal magic which swept me off my feet. It was like Coleridge's "A damsel with a dulcimer" in "Kubla Khan". I read the *Harikatha* and also the life-story of the Dasa. I was ruminating over the song and the past recitals of father. I said: "Let me read more about Jagannath Dasa. Let me write my own impressions of the Dasa." I decided to do it, but had to postpone it due to the routine of the office. However, I wrote a short feature in Kannada on the life of Jagannath Dasa for the All India Radio, Bombay. It was broadcast sometime in 1982

A grandson was born and was named Jagannath Dasa. Like Jagannath Dasa perhaps, he was born to suffer a great deal because of his birth problems. I prayed to the Swamy (Shri Raghavendra Swamy) and like Jagannath Dasa I surrendered my grandson to the Swamy for him to protect. The boy is now six years old, goes to school, struggles hard to overcome his physical problems. His "chaulkarma" was performed at Shri Mantralayam and one had to see it to believe; the boy who could not bear even a soft cold breeze could bathe, without any physical discomfort, in the cold waters of the Tungabhadra in the morning of January. All the physical incidents stood witness to the supernatural and divine powers of Shri Raghavendra Swamy and Jagannath Dasa.

It was therefore high time that I paid my debt to the Dasa by writing his life-story. I have done it in the following pages. I am confident that the Dasa will bless the readers and bring cheer and light in their life.



(Dr. Keshav M. Mutalik)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The author is grateful to the T. T. D. (its *Karnataka Haridasas*) and the writers of *An Introduction to Haridasa-Sahitya of Karnatak* and *Harikathamrutasara* (in Kannada) from whose publications I have taken Jagannath Dasa's pictures.

This Book is Dedicated to

My Sister who always recites

**Harikathamruta Sara**

and

My Grandson, Jagannath Dasa

who bears the Great Dasa's name

and

the late Shri Vishnuteerth Adavi

(My daughter-in-law's grandfather)

who led a life of piety.

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# THE DASA OF KARNATAKA

The Bhagawata Sampradaya fostered Bhakti, devotion and surrender to God. The path of knowledge (ज्ञानमार्ग) being long and tortuous in reaching God, the common man was almost deterred by knowledge to attain God's grace and blessings. Prayer, worship, total surrender to the Almighty constituted the new royal road to the gate of God. Bhagawata Purana, Hari-Vamsha and short and simple stories of Lord Krishna and his worshippers attracted the attention of people to relieve them of wordly miseries and life's evil moments. The Bhagawata Dharma developed in the north and took deep roots in Bengal and Maharashtra. In the South, Dvaita philosophy, so enthusiastically taught by Madhva-charya, created a great awakening for God in the mind of his followers. Madhva and his ascetic followers propagated the Dvaita Siddhanta through their commentaries and critical lectures. These were written in Sanskrit and read mainly by learned people. The Pandit's lectures went over the head of several common people who were not fit to be initiated into the marvels of the Siddhanta. An alternate avenue had, necessarily to be found and that was offered by a few devoted followers of Madhva. These followers studied the core books, read philosophy, practised asceticism though living a householder's life and dedicated themselves to the service of God. This set of followers undertook the mission of carrying Madhva's teaching to the four corners of the country using Kannada or the local language as a vehicle of communication. These spirited missionaries were known as the Dasas. They used Kannada to talk to the people, wrote poems and sang them in the streets of the town. Their main mission was to reach the greatness of the Lord to the rich man's house and to the huts of the poor people. The Dasas did a yeoman service in breaking the shackles of caste, creed and regionalism. They were socially oriented and dedicated themselves to the service of God and man.

His creation. One can, without any hesitation, say that the Dasas were the pioneers in social uplift. "The Bhakti of the Vaishnava — Dasas, reinforced as it is by acute philosophical thinking, soon appealed to the craving soul, as the best weapon to propitiate God Sri Hari." (*An Introduction to Haridasa — Sahitya of Karnatak* — R. S. Panchamukhi — p. xxiii).

The Dasas were instrumental in propagating the term "Dasa-Kuta". People used this term to denote the Dasas and their work while "Vyasa-Kuta", another very popular term, denoted the followers of scholars and pandits. There was no violent difference between the two in their training, approach and philosophy. The followers of Vyasa-Kuta, being scholars, strongly believed in the use of Sanskrit for learning and teaching. "The word Dasakuta denotes 'A class of Dasas (slaves of Hari)', and it is equivalent to the expression 'Bhakti-Pantha' or 'Bhakti-Sampradaya'. The words 'Dasaru' and 'Vyasaru' first came into vogue in the time of Purandaradasa and his religious preceptor, Vyasaraya. Later on, the disciples of Purandaradasa were called 'Dasa Kutasthas'. But afterwards the words Vyasakuta and Dasakuta assumed a different meaning altogether. 'Vyasakuta' meant the branch of devotees who were well-versed in Sanskrit and who knew the philosophy in the original, and 'Dasakuta' meant that branch of devotees who conveyed the message of the Dvaita philosophy and religion through the vernaculars." (*Mystic Teachings of the Haridasas of Karnatak*: A. P. Karmarkar and N. B. Kalamdani: pp 9 and 10). Karmarkar and Kalamdani put the Dasas into three groups according to their preferences. One group represented by Vijayadasa, Jagannathadasa, Venkatesh and others was mainly interested in Madhva philosophy and its preaching to the commonalty through the medium of Kannada. The second group headed by Vyasaraya, followed by Gopaladas and others created a literature meant for the Brahmanical world in general. The third group consisted of Sripadaraya, Vadiraya, Purandaradasa (and his sons) and Kanakadasa preached the ordinary code of morality for people of all castes and communities. All the Dasas uttered the name of Hari and the other manifestations of Hari.

Panchamukhi points out four distinct landmarks in the literature of the Dasas based on the style, and subject-matter. The thirteenth century marked the origin of the Vaishnava Bhakti



School or the Haridasa Kuta. The entire activities of the Dasakuta starts from 13th century to 19th century.

The 13th century Dasa literature started under the guidance of Shri Naraharitirtha, the disciple of Shri Madhvacharya. This indeed is the creative period.

Between 15th and 16th centuries stalwarts like Sripadaraya, Vyasatirtha, Vijayindratirtha and Purandaradas flowering, in abundance, of the Dasa literature. This is the classical period.

The 17th century brought to the limelight Shri Raghavendra-tirtha and Shri Vedeshatirtha. There was not a mass production of the Dasa literature but the period stimulated the Dasa Sahitya, especially after, the decline of Vijayanagara empire.

The heyday of Dasa Sahitya was in 18th and 19th centuries. There were many great writers such as Vijayadasa, Gopaladasa, Jagannathadasa, Prasanna Venkatadasa. Their writings were polished and highly literary. They were didactic because the sole purpose was to preach. The period is therefore called the didactic period.

The Dasakuta took upon itself the teaching of Dvaita Siddhanta for the benefit of the common people. The Dasakuta simplified the abstruse philosophical teachings of Dvaita and presented them to an average student in chaste and simple Kannada to enable him to grasp the principles and to practise them in his daily life. The Kuta stressed the meditative practices followed by Vyasakuta whose members were Sanyasis. The Dasas have experienced the glories of God by intuition and have harnessed the experiences to solve knotty problems posed by Vyasakuta. The Dasas were Apariksha Gnyanis, the mystics who, by personal practice and God's grace, realised Godhead. They were the ardent devotees of Lord Hari. They sang their songs and danced in the streets to spread the principles of Dvaita and Bhakti.

The songs of the Dasakuta can be classified into seven major groups. These are based on the subject matter of the songs. The groups are —

(i) biographical

(ii) socio-religious

- (iii) ethical and ritualistic
- (iv) didactic and philosophical
- (v) meditative
- (vi) narrative and eulogistic
- (vii) miscellaneous.

The sources of the songs were the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas as interpreted by Madhva and his followers.

The Dasas sang the praise of God Shri Hari. Hari is the supreme God who transcends all the trammels of Prakriti and who lords over the entire universe of spirit and matter. Lord Shri Hari is independent and all-powerful. He is capable of doing, undoing and contra-doing which no other God can achieve. Lakshmi-devi is inseparably associated with Shri Hari. She is His consort and is inferior to Him in all respects. She is the embodiment of knowledge, wealth and bliss.

Next to Lakshmi-devi is Vayu who is the highest among the dependent Jivas. The Dasas, being strict followers of Madhva, believe in a hierarchy of Gods and the principle of differentiation viz. Taratamya. All human beings pine for Mukti or emancipation. It is an experience of unmixed joy, the full expression of the innate faculty of Sat, Chit and Ananda. Bhakti (devotion) and Prasada (Lord's Grace) are the ultimate means to Mukti.

"The Haridasas analyse the various experiences of humanity and declare that fleeing away to the wilderness through fear of worldly misery is no remedy to escape from the bondage of Samsara. 'Live the life of a hero and fight ignorance with courage, the unflinching faith in God Sri Hari and detachment from the selfish worldly pleasures, is the ultimate advice they preached to the devotees.'" (*An Introduction : Panchamukhi*: p. xxxiv).

The Haridasas depicted Brahmanical society in their works. However, they did a great service to the masses in Karnatak. Additionally, the post-Vyasarayana commentators also propagated the Dvaita Siddhanta. The entire Karnatak and parts of Maharashtra resounded with scholastic discussion. The Vyasakuta was

revived and the Dasakuta was patronised by Shri Raghavendra Teertha who holds a high place of honour. He holds a unique place in the religious, philosophical and devotional history of India in the 17th Century.

Vijayadasa and his disciple Gopaladasa explained to people the nature of true renunciation. The group of Dasas headed by Vijayadasa flourished at a time when the spiritual thirst in man had reached the lowest level. The excellent work done by his group carried the teachings to the lowest people. The group adopted Kannada as an instrument of mass communication. Jagannathadasa who belonged to this group was a great Sanskrit scholar who realised the supernatural work done by the simple and dedicated Dasas. Though an erudite scholar in the "shastras" Jagannathadasa submitted completely to the saints, Vijayadasa and Gopaladasa. They initiated him into the Haridasas discipline.

It may be pointed out that the Dasas through their music and poetry reformed the society that had gone rudderless. The Dasas achieved a great mission of preaching philosophy through the language of the common people. The work of the Dasas is outstanding in literature and philosophy. Among them stands high the excellent contribution of Jagannathadasa.

## BIRTH AND PARENTAGE

The fertile land between the rivers Krishna and Tungabhadra flowing in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh was a seat of great learning and scholarship. It fostered many a poet, philosopher and thinker. The small royal principalities like Adoni, Gadwal and Raichur patronized the growth of music, traditional study of the Shastras and Haridasakuta. By the beginning of 18th century, Mantralaya, established by Shri Raghavendra Swamy, attracted devotees from all walks of life to cleanse their sins and seek the blessings of the Swamy. The successors of the Raghavendra Swamy Math firmly established Mantralaya as a seat of Sanskrit studies and Dvaita philosophy. The pontiffs themselves taught the budding young scholars Vedanta, Madhva Siddhanta and the numerous commentaries on the writings of Madhva, the chief among them being the critical commentaries of Teekacharya. With the fall of Vijayanagara empire, Hindu culture and religion got a set back but was not totally destroyed. The atmosphere of piety despite rapier thrusts and slow poisoning to destroy it, lived dormant in the beginning but sprouted into a healthy plant later. The work of non-institutionalized preaching was undertaken by the Haridasas who, though householders and common citizens, bore the torch of Dvaita to spread to each village and each household. Because the Dasas had no Maths or established schools, they did not attract the wrath of Muslim princes who were bent upon destroying Hindu religion. The Dasas could carry on their studies without anyone's interference. By their piety, simple life of self-abnegation the Dasas influenced the life of common people and, sometimes, earned the respect of the alien rulers, too. Some Muslim rulers either tolerated the Dasas or patronized them. The Dasas brought a new wave of social reform and reawakening. The quality of the Dasas emphasized the social awakening and strove for equality of religion,

caste and sex. So, there were many to follow the Dasas and to learn the art of good living.

Unlike his predecessors and Gurus such as Vijayadasa and Gopaladasa, Jagannathadasa was born in a family of well-to-do parents. The Gurus, Vijayadasa and Gopaladasa, suffered indescribable miseries due to poverty and want. They had to live without food and shelter. They roamed about basically in search of the necessities of life and turned their attention away from life's problems to spiritual knowledge. They were self-schooled and had no formal education in Sanskrit. They learned the Vedas and the Upanishads from other people but their knowledge of the Shastras was not of a high Pandit's standard. The Gurus preached the Dvaita Siddhanta through the medium of Kannada — the language of the common people not of the Pandits. Additionally, their Kannada was simple and the spoken language of the people. Though they were blessed, God-intoxicated and had the Divine presence before them, they did not easily get recognition and respect of the Sanyasis and Pandits. They had to struggle hard to influence the Pandits and the Scholars and to tell them that bookish knowledge was inferior to personal experience.

Jagannath Dasa was born in a family of a middle-class landholder, who though not rich, was not on the streets to beg for a living. Life, that way, for Jagannath Dasa was not hard and problematic. Jagannath Dasa's father Narasappa, hailed from a Brahmin family and belonged to a village called Byagavatti. The village of which he was a Kulkarni, now called Talati, was in Manavi Taluka of Raichur District. This was around 1700 A.D. Life was very compartmentalized because most places suffered from lack of good communication. Horse-carriage or bullock-cart and foot were the only means of contact. Still, administration was carried on fairly effectively by the princely rulers and their assistants. The Nawabs, though non-Hindus, had Hindus as their Diwans or Prime Ministers. They were advised by the Diwans in all matters, temporal and spiritual. Sometimes a bigoted, fanatical prince did victimize his officers who either did not belong to his religious denomination or did not impress upon the ruler by gifts. The position of a Talati was very peculiar and pivotal in the administrative set-up. It was he who collected the

land revenue and deposited it in the prince's treasury. The Talati had no discretion to recommend remission or to remit the revenue or postpone its collection even when there was famine or natural calamity. He used to see people's suffering and calamity, still he had to put down the axe of collection. Additionally, the Talati had to spend on entertaining officers to curry their favour. Narasappa, an honest, god-fearing Talati was a total misfit in the Muslim administration. Though honest, he was cunningly implicated in a case and dispossessed of his lands and job. So, he went to Timmannayya who was Nawab Balasat's Prime Minister. The Nawab was ruling over the territory of Adoni, then called Adwani. Timmannayya wielded considerable influence on the Nawab but, being a non-Muslim, a Brahmin, he was hated by his Muslim colleagues and officers. They were waiting for an opportunity to dislodge Timmannayya and even punish him.

Timmannayya was a pious man with a philosophic bent of mind. His only son, Vasappa, who was handsome and intelligent was converted to Islam and married to the Nawab's beautiful daughter. Vasappa became Rahimtullakhan and became the Nawab's favourite Prince. Timmannayya could neither protest nor contain himself to the growing grief. His latent philosophic predilection urged him to turn away from his office, family and the vestiges of power. He requested the Nawab to relieve him of the Prime Ministership because he came under the spell of Vijaya Dasa and was granted the signet title of Gopala Vithala. Timmannayya later became a great Dasa himself. However, during the problematic days of Narasappa, Timmannayya was in power and, having realized the Talati's predicament he granted Narasappa a piece of land and advised him to give up service and lead a simple life of a Brahmin farmer. Narasappa most gladly appreciated the situation and accepting the small land-gift restarted his life in the village, Manavi. He had enough land to feed him and attained the position of a small Dasa initiated by Timmannayya. Narasappa sang a couple of songs—now not available—under the signet of Narasimha Vithala. Narasappa now became Narasimha Dasa and spent his life dedicated to the Lord. He learned Mantras, rituals of worship and led a carefree life of a priest-cum-Dasa.

To Narasappa was born, in 1727, a bonny son who was

christened Shrinivasa after the Lord of Seven Hills, Tirupati. The child was highly precocious and showed, even in early age, signs of intelligence and understanding. The boy received his early lessons at home and in the village school. He did his studies in one day when other boys slogged for ten days. Kannada, Sanskrit and philosophic texts covered the school education those days. Shrinivasa obtained the foundation in grammar and logic and was ready to undergo further training. He was a born poet and composed verses in Sanskrit extemporaneously. A fair complexioned, slim, young Shrinivasa, attracted the attention of village elders contemporaries and scholars from outside. Timmannayya was impressed by the boy's mastery over Sanskrit and advised his father, Narasappa, to allow the young man to continue further studies at the Shri Raghavendra Swamy Math which was a famous seat of learning — a University specializing in Sanskrit, philosophy and Dvaita Siddhanta. Hundreds of young scholars had been receiving training there directly under the guidance of the Peethastha Sanyasi, Varadendra Teertha who was himself a renowned Sanskrit scholar and excellent teacher. Besides heading the Math, he personally supervised the training school and encouraged young scholars to pursue Dvaita Siddhanta.

Shrinivasa went to the Swamy and expressed his desire to enrol himself as a student. It was no oral prosaic introduction when the future disciple and the Swamy met. Shrinivasa instantly composed a five stanza poem on the Swamy. Known as Varadendra Panchratna the poem was dedicated to the Swamy. The first stanza praised Varadendra and Varadaraja Swamy. The second stanza extolled Raghavendra Swamy and Shri Ramachandra. The third stanza contained a reference to Vasudeva, Vayudeva, and again, Varadendra. The fourth stanza referred to the acquisition of Moo'la Ramadeva and the establishment of Raghavendra Swamy Math. The final stanza clearly expressed Shrinivasa's keen desire to study at the feet of the Swamy and paid respectful "pranam" to the future Guru.

The Swamy was pleased with the student's poetic excellence and blessed him. He predicted that Shrinivasa had a bright future dedicated to the service of Lord Shri Hari and Guru Madhva-charya. He did not indicate how Shrinivasa would serve but a Swamy's words had to be accepted. The Swamy immediately

initiated the boy into Sanskrit and philosophic studies. Starting with the lectures on *Tatva Prakashika*, and *Nyaya Sudha*, Varadendra Swamy taught Shrinivasa Raghavendra Swamy's commentaries and asked him to lecture to junior students. Soon Shrinivasa became the Swamy's favourite disciple and sat with him in discussions and discourses. He followed the Swamy in his itinerary of religious lectures and preaching. With him Shrinivasa visited all the important religious places and participated in learned debates and discourses. The most notable place he visited was Poona (Pune) where he argued most convincingly on Poorva Meemansa. Everyone was baffled by the young disciple's powers of argument and the high intellectual attainment. People found in him the seeds of a great Pandit well-versed in all the Shastras and particularly, in Dvaita Siddhanta. The Swamy was pleased with the disciple's performance and wished him further progress and prosperity.

After the itinerary the time came to bid good-by to the Math. Shrinivasa had graduated in the studies creditably and was now fit to establish his own training school at his native place. Since Shrinivasa graduated with distinction he was awarded the title of Acharya by the Swamy and was called Shrinivasacharya. Shrinivasacharya's marriage, too, was arranged by the Swamy. The Acharya's wife was a true traditionalist and had the Hindu wife's graces. The Acharya was thus blessed with a degree, a recognized title and good wife. What more can a young man aspire for? A young scholar who was personally tutored by no less a person than the pontiff of Rayara Math, who acquired in his early age a name that spread to the four corners of Karnatak and even Maharashtra and who had property at the village made great strides in life. The Acharya was a renowned Pandit and was always sought after for Shastri knowledge. By now the Acharya's parents had died leaving the entire property to the lone son. Fame as a great scholar spread to all people. So, the Acharya became intolerant of other people. As a Sanskrit proverb says:

यौवनं धनसंपत्तिः प्रभुत्वम् विवेकता ।

एकैकमप्यनर्थाय किमुयत्रचतुष्टयम् ॥



*(Youth, wealth, power and indiscretion even singly can bring destruction, what of their four-fold combination?)*

The Acharya lost his mental equanimity and started disrespecting other great saints and scholars. He imposed on himself many rituals such as not eating outside — even Shri Hari's "prasada" — not partaking the food prepared by others etc. This brought him, he thought, a good deal of prestige, social standing and respect.

Of special mention was the Acharya's utter ridicule of Haridasas. Because they were not great Sanskrit Pandits, the Acharya laughed at them derisively and heaped censure and neglect. Also, the Acharya hated the use of Kannada because he considered it to be the language of very common people — not scholars. Even his father who was Narasimha Dasa was called Narasimhacharya because, to him, Dasa was a term of derision. The practice of condemning the Dasa reached a climax in the later period and ultimately humbled the Acharya.

The bitter truth was realized later at great personal suffering. Anyway, the fact that Shinivasa became Shrinivasacharya remains a mile-stone in his life. Shrinivasa had the good fortune of getting the best type of education at the right time. That brought him greatness and strength. A temporary eclipse was the Acharya's own making but a thorough knowledge of the Shastras moulded his style and made it Kannada well undefiled, a style that contained many graces of literature and thought.

# RETRIBUTION AND SURRENDER

“Pride goes before a fall” proved to be absolutely true in the case of Shrinivasacharya. He considered himself great and expected to be treated with the utmost respect next to the Swamis of the Math itself. Megalomania struck a grievous blow on the young Acharya. He did not realize that mere bookish knowledge did not mean anything in the Kingdom of God. People respected the Sanyasis and the Dasas who led a simple life of austerity and were the humble disciples of God. The Dasas were great seers and lived philosophy. They were the embodiment of the best in Dvairta Siddhanta. They had renounced Kama, Krodha, Mada, Matsara (lust, anger, vanity and jealousy) They were the repositories of idealism, service to God through the service of the community. So, people followed them and respected them whenever they visited their villages.

The period of Shrinivasacharya coincided with the advent of great Dasas in the district of Raichur. Apart from his own father who was a Dasa, there as many as three great Dasas who wielded considerable influence on the people due to their piety and blessings of God they enjoyed. They had reached God-head and lived to preach His message. At Cheekalapari near Manavi lived Vijaya Dasa who was Shrinivasacharya's maternal uncle. His disciple, Gopala Dasa established himself at Uttanooru. The Diwan of Adoni, Timmannayya himself was Vijaya Dasa's ardent disciple. When all these Dasas operated there Shrinivasacharya should have humbly prepared himself to understand them, if not follow them as their disciple. Instead, he hated them, condemned them openly by calling them names and questioning their piety. He pounced upon a great soul like Vijaya Dasa and called him derisively “Kooseemaga Dasa”, (In the early period people made fun of Vijaya Dasa by calling him “Kooseemaga Dasa” because his mother was named “Kooosu”. Later they realized their mistake

and became his humble servants.) and said: "What does this fool-headed Dasa know? He is innocent of Sanskrit and the Vedanta. What audacity he has to pretend to have earned the grace of Shri Hari? He is a third-rate bard a little more sophisticated than a beggar. Why should people follow him? I am a great Sanskrit Pandit. I have been blessed by no less a person than Vedesha Teertha. How can this despicable cur compare himself with a lion? Let these people stop following the beggar." Thus Shrinivasacharya harangued to the people of his village especially when the great Vijaya Dasa had camped there. This attitude of the Acharya turned many people away from him. Instead of appreciating the Acharya's abusive language more people attended the sessions of Vijaya Dasa.

Being an omniscient person Vijaya Dasa knew the Acharya's foolish activities. He also knew that great work was to be achieved by the Acharya in his later life. This period of senseless criticism and irresponsible behaviour was a passing phase. Vijaya Dasa by meditation had understood that the Acharya had to undergo severe punishment, a retribution for his arrogance after which, like tested shining gold, he would be fit for initiation. So, Vijaya Dasa had purposely visited Manavi to advise the Acharya to avoid future suffering. But it is ordained by God that things that are destined to occur have to happen and that suffering and sacrifice chasten a person. The Acharya would not listen to the Dasa's advice and had to suffer unmitigated ill health and deprivation. He had to shed his ego and vanity.

Vijaya Dasa's practice, wherever he camped, was to tour round the village or town in the morning reciting the songs in praise of God. He used to be followed by a few disciples. The Dasa would stop at each house for "Bhiksha" (voluntary offering of foodgrains or flour) and invite the inmates to the "Prasadam" (free lunch after worship). The Dasa purposely went to Shrinivasacharya's house and wanted to personally invite him for Prasadam. The Acharya spurned even the meeting and, without caring to even look at the Dasa, said "Yes" for the lunch-invitation. The Dasa out of compassion did not take it as an offence but went to the next house. The lunch was arranged after the "Pooja" and "Teertha" (sacred water). Since the great Acharya had not arrived, the Dasa sent a disciple to call the

Acharya for "Prasadam". Shrinivasacharya did not bother to partake of the lunch sanctified by worship and the Lord's grace. He told a lie to the disciple. "The Acharya has a severe stomach ache and cannot, therefore, partake of the "Prasadam," said the Acharya's disciple. When the message was conveyed to Vijaya Dasa he felt sorry but said: "Let it be as uttered."

God's anger through the Dasa haunted the Acharya who had committed a double crime — one spurning the holy "Prasadam" and the second telling a lie. The Acharya started feeling the falsely assumed stomach pain which now was real. The pain did not subside. Local medicine and wife's personal attention in changing the food and water was of no avail. The Acharya suffered unmitigated pain and discomfort. His tuition to young scholars was suspended; his research into the intricacies of the Shastras was left unpursued. Life became unbearable. The Dasa had already left Manavi. One day the Acharya's wife said: "You have now become half of what you were before. You have not been eating anything because nothing agrees with your digestive system. Why don't you apologize to the Dasa whom you insulted." The weak and emaciated Acharya lost his temper. He had, by now, become anaemic and was considered to be suffering from T.B. The Acharya angrily said: "Don't ever mention that Dasa to me. What can he do? Do you think he has the power to curse me? That Kooseemaga is an illiterate Kannada-speaking beggar. He to curse a great Acharya? Don't put foolish thoughts into my brains." The wife was silently bearing the pangs of suffering.

The stomach ache would not stop. What could the Acharya do? He thought of resorting to the blessings of Shri Raghavendra Swamy and went to Mantralayam to perform rigorous penance or service to the Swamy. Bathing in the cold waters of the river, Tungabhadra, the Acharya circum-ambulated the Vrindavan morning till evening without food or water, except the Teertha. This went on for two weeks. The result was not encouraging. The pain increased along with weakness. There appeared no sign of the control of the pain. So, in an utterly desperate moment, the Acharya lying down at the feet of the Vrindavan decided to commit suicide the next day by jumping into the river. With this decision, the hungry, physically weak and mentally shattered Acharya slept to have his last night. In his dream appeared

Shri Raghavendra Swamy who dissuaded him from suicide and ordered him to go to Vijaya Dasa whom he had insulted. He should unconditionally apologize to him and follow his instructions. Bidding good-bye to Shri Raghavendra Swamy, the Acharya went to Cheekalapari to fall at the feet of Vijaya Dasa. The Dasa took pity on the Acharya, pardoned his fault and advised him to go to his own disciple, Gopala Dasa, living at Uttanooru. The Acharya, humbled by Kooseemaga Dasa and pardoned, went to Uttanooru to be initiated into Dasakuta by Gopala Dasa. The man who hated the Dasas was now a faithful slave of the Dasas. Retribution and suffering made him realize the plain truth of the greatness of the Dasas who preached Dvaita Siddhanta in Kannada and who, though uneducated in formal Sanskrit education, were more learned than the so-called Pandits. It was like a crow teaching a cuckoo how to sing. Gopala Dasa knew that the Acharya was to go to him. So, to clear the street of thorns and pebbles for the ailing man to walk, he was sweeping the main street. The Acharya asked him where Gopala Dasa was. The Dasa asked him to go to his house. But on reaching there he was told that the man who was sweeping the street was himself Gopala Dasa. So humble was the Dasa, so ignorant was the Acharya! When the Acharya met the Dasa, the Dasa himself told the Acharya his Guru Vijaya Dasa's message. It was then that the Acharya realized how omniscient and omnipotent were the Dasas and how they attained the position by humbly dedicating themselves to God.

After further testing the Acharya's sincerity, egolessness and total surrender to God and the preceptor, Gopala Dasa accepted him as his disciple. In the acid test the Acharya unconditionally surrendered himself to the Dasas. A place was made available to the Acharya. Gopala Dasa gave him sanctified bread to eat and cured his stomach ache. However, the Acharya was physically exhausted and haggard looking. He still had to take great care of himself. Acharya's devoted wife and his son, Damodara, gratefully acknowledged the Dasa's blessings and accepted him as the Acharya's saviour.

Despite the transformation in the Acharya brought about by retribution and suffering, he was still not mature enough to be initiated into a Dasa. So, he had to undergo the probationary

period when Gopala Dasa would observe his mental awareness and preparedness. The Acharya's constant company at the Dasa's house created in the former great interest in Kannada prayers offered to God. It created a longing for writing the praise of God and singing them on the streets of the town. It was thus that hard work brought solace to the Acharya and made him forget his pride and ego.

# JOURNEY TO TIRUPATI

## ACHARYA BECOMES DASA

Shrinivasacharya's recovery from the debilitating stomachache was very fast. Yet he was weak and was not his former self. During this period of his convalescence, Gopala Dasa and his followers planned a trip of Shri Tirupati. The Dasa used to go on a pilgrimage to many religious places to have the "Darshan" of the local deities. While going on the pilgrimage, the Dasa and his followers used to walk putting their luggage on the horse back. Only the sick and the old were allowed to sit on the horses. Since Shrinivasacharya, despite the Dasa's advice to the contrary wanted to accompany the group, he was asked to ride a horse. But out of devotion and love for suffering, the Acharya expressed his desire to walk with others. He did not use a "doli" to climb the Tirumalai to reach the Lord. This heavy physical exercise brought about a sudden deterioration in the Acharya's health. He was pale with exhaustion, breathlessness and, with great difficulty, reached the house reserved for the entourage.

The party immediately left for the Lord's "Darshan" and was busy with the other activities of the pilgrim centre. The Acharya went to the temple, circumambulated the idol and being weak, went to the room. As he entered his room he felt inconsolably uncomfortable and breathless. When he was extremely strengthless he went to his mattress to have a rest. But the breathlessness increased, and for a time the Acharya thought he would not live. The feeling of reaching the end of life's journey brought before him the Dasa and the Guru of the Dasa, Vijaya Dasa. He prayed to the Lord and lay dead. Gopala Dasa, as enjoined on by his Guru, gave a part of his life to Shrinivasacharya and praying to the God of medicine and good health, Dhanvantari, Gopala Dasa breathed life into the Acharya's dead body. The patient started moving his eyeballs and as though he was in a long dream

started uttering incoherent things like Yama, God of Death, taking him away but left him half way. The Acharya was still resting and wanted food for his nourishment. The Dasa went to the temple to fetch food and holy water. But an unbelievable miracle occurred when Lord Venkatesh, Himself, brought "Prasadam" and the holy water for the Acharya. But no one could disbelieve Him because the God arrived there disguised as Gopala Dasa. After the Acharya partook of the sanctified food and water, he became strong and fit to carry out his daily routine. He got up to go to the temple when he saw Gopala Dasa with food and "teertha". The Dasa had to wait in the queue for a long time and, therefore, apologized to the Acharya for the delay. The Acharya was surprised to find food again. He said: "Sir, how can you say this? You have already fed me a few minutes ago. You brought health giving "Prasadam" and "teertha". See, I ate the food and have still on my hand the sweet aroma of the holy food." The Dasa immediately realized what had happened. "You, Acharya, are blessed, indeed! It was Lord Venkatesh, Himself, who came to you. I was standing to obtain food. You are a great soul because you had the holy presence. May the Lord bless you!" The entire food was again distributed and the Acharya came to know that he was dead and that the Dasa, as ordained by Vijaya Dasa, transferred a part of his life to the Acharya. Tears of gratitude rolled from his eyes and his devotion to the Dasas was reinforced beyond measure.

The return journey was uneventful. Gopala Dasa started the routine at Uttanooru and the Acharya and his family became a part of the Dasa group. The Acharya was now determined to be installed as a Dasa with permission to write Kannada poems in praise of Shri Hari. So, he approached his Guru for a total involvement. Gopala Dasa by his clairvoyance comprehended that the Acharya had to receive the initiation from the Lord of Pandharpur as was done in the case of the prince of Dasas, Shri Purandara Dasa. The Acharya was advised to go to Pandharpur and surrender himself to Shri Vithoba for the Dasha-hood. Shrinivasacharya accordingly went to Pandharpur and like a common devotee worshipped the Lord. He fasted and invited upon himself all physical punishments to go nearer to God because the Lord tests His devotee in all respects. He wants to



know whether or not the devotee has renounced his physical pleasures, luxuries and ego. Then only the Lord finds the subject to be enlightened and fit to receive His favours. Everyday in the morning the Acharya used to bathe in the river, with wet clothes reach the temple to worship and, sitting in a corner, performed meditation. This exercise continued for a month or so. There was no respite, no indication to go back to his town after the regular stipulated worship and no initiation into Dasahood. The Acharya, though sad at the delay in receiving favours, single-mindedly continued the schedule and most willingly stayed at Pandharpur. Suddenly one day as the Acharya had a dip into the river, his head hit a stone and he found it with the inscription "Jagannath Vitthala". The Acharya was overjoyed to find the stone as a favour and since then accepted the service of the Lord under the title, "Jagannath Vitthala" and he himself became Jagannath Dasa. This is the name by which Shrinivasacharya was now recognized all over the Dasa World. Jagannath Dasa was the most blessed person because, instead of receiving initiation from a Guru or another Dasa, he got it straight from Vitthala only. So the Dasa was very happy.

During Jagannath Dasa's stay later at Pandharpur he was, it is believed, invited to a lunch by a priest. There were hundred people for the lunch which was served by many fair-looking women. The lunch was heavenly in delicacy and taste. The lunch got over and suddenly everybody disappeared leaving Jagannath Dasa alone. The Dasa did not know what had happened — the lunch tastefully and deliciously served and the sudden disappearance of all people. The Lord appeared and apologized to the Dasa for not taking care of him and for putting him to a severe test. The Dasa therefore was served the lunch and now was free to go home. The Lord's command was obeyed. The Dasa started his journey back to Uttanooru and disclosed the glad news of his initiation into the Dasa.

All the people were happy to welcome Jagannath Dasa and the Guru asked his disciple to go ahead with his writings and work. Jagannath Dasa went to Manavi, his native village, and wrote a number of songs in praise of God Shrinivasacharya thus became Jagannath Dasa.

# JAGANNATH DASA'S PILGRIMAGES

After being a Dasa, Jagannath Dasa earned, within a short period, the respect of Kings, scholars and lay men. The Dasa's "Keertanas" (prayers, commentaries and stories) were very popular in the whole of Karnataka. Kings and saints used to appreciate the great talent, extraordinary intellect and holiness of Jagannath Dasa. With a sound background of Sanskrit and Kannada the Dasa fascinated the followers by his lectures and discussions. He wrote a number of songs in praise of Shri Hari and propagated the fundamental principles of Madhvacharya.

To reach his preachings to the remotest corners and to offer prayers to several deities and saints, the Dasa undertook extensive pilgrimages to the north and the south. He now had a big entourage of disciples, horses and servants. He used to sit in a closed "mene" or "doli" (a palanquin-like cage carried by servants) and travelled comfortably. As a part of his duty he went to Vijaya Dasa and paid homage to him. It was indeed Vijaya Dasa who saved Shrinivasacharya's life and was largely instrumental in making him a Dasa. He wrote a song in praise of the senior Dasa. "I have found a precious diamond that has created in me a brightness to take my travels in darkness." Vijaya Dasa was a torch that illumined many people's paths of darkness. The Guru blessed Jagannath Dasa and told him the great and onerous work that was expected of him. He had to carry on the high tradition set by Purandara Dasa and to preach Dvaita Siddhanta so lucidly explained by Shri Madhvacharya. Jagannath Dasa was thus burdened with a heavy responsibility and, for a time, tottered under the weight. "How am I," he thought humbly, "going to carry the heavy, awesome work of Madhvacharya? I am in no way fit to do it. I am a bigoted Pandit turned into a Dasa. This was because of the blessings of the Gurus like Vijaya Dasa, Gopala Dasa and the great saint, Shri Raghavendra Swamy.

I consider myself to be totally unfit to do the work." He could not express the thoughts to the Guru and excuse himself from the work because the Dasa was ordered to do the work. Bidding good-bye to Vijaya Dasa, Jagannath Dasa started his important pilgrimage to Tirupati where he had died but was revived by Gopala Dasa. The journey, unlike the previous one, was smooth and comfortable. The Dasa and his followers moved from place to place till they reached Tirupati. The Dasa curiously saw someone following him. The stranger was behind the Dasa everywhere, at the river, at the worship and on the journey. The Dasa did not know what the stranger wanted. But curiosity had its limits. It exceeded the boundary and prompted the Dasa to ask the stranger what he wanted. That was a poor Brahmin who had a small family consisting of a wife and two children. The family was so poor that it had hardly anything to eat. So, it had followed the entourage because it easily obtained food. The Dasa read the stranger's mind. He was simple, honest and sincere but he had not done any charity. Consequently the Brahmin and his family suffered untold privations. Jagannath Dasa took pity on the family and wanted to help it only if the Brahmin was willing to undergo hard penances. The Brahmin was first asked what he wanted to sacrifice. The Brahmin had only a copper pot which, he said, would be given by way of charity and parted with it to no less a person than the Dasa himself. The Dasa accepted it, asked the Brahmin to sell it to buy sugar for the Lord's "prasadam". Sugar and water served as "Sharbat" to please the deity and the Brahmins. Then Jagannath Dasa asked the Brahmin to recite for a month a prayer composed by the Dasa to Lord Narasimha.

Fired by devotion and service the Brahmin temporarily stayed in a dilapidated temple ate the wild fruits, poured water squeezing it from the cloth (he had no pot) on the idol by way of worship and slept on the floor. The temple was snake-infested and deserted. Still the Brahmin followed the worship diligently and contentedly. Once the Raja of Surpur in whose territory the temple existed came there on a hunting expedition. He was tired and required rest urgently. There he saw the Brahmin. But the Raja, Venkatappanayak needed a rest but was disturbed by the arrival of a letter. He called the Brahmin to read it for him and

was pleased with the happy news of the letter. He asked the poor Brahmin why he lived in the forest. The poor man narrated his miserable story. The Raja was surprised to see a wise man going without food and asked him to meet him in the palace. The Brahmin, a disciple of Jagannath Dasa who was highly revered by the Raja, was offered a job in the palace and rose to the position of the Diwan of the State. Jagannath Dasa was extremely happy to learn of the rise of his disciple and blessed his family and the Brahmin. This was how the Dasa transferred the Lord's favours to his devotees.

Jagannath Dasa then proceeded to pay respects to the pontiff of Uttaradi Math, Shri Satyabodha Teerth. The heads of the Math for a long time had scant regard for the Dasas because the Dasas were considered to be ignorant of philosophy, Shastras and Sanskrit learning. They were not Pandits and were believed to be people of little learning. But Dasas like Vijaya Dasa, Gopala Dasa disproved this false idea and showed the Pandits how well read they were and how closer they were to salvation. The Dasas were "Aparoksha Jnyanis" (seers and omniscient) and were the real disciples of God. Shri Satyabodha Teerth invited Jagannath Dasa and fully enjoyed his songs in praise of God. The Dasa was so close to the Sanyasi that each proved to the other how noble and pious they were. The Pandits detested this special treatment given to a mere Dasa; but who could tell the great pontiff? They were mortally afraid of the Guru. Jagannath Dasa was responsible for introducing a system of Lord's worship by the offer of songs. This practice is even today followed in all the Maths.

Jagannath Dasa went to Karjagi, a small town near Savanoor where the Uttaradi Math pontiff had camped. The many disciples of the Dasa begged of him to visit their town to bless them. The Dasa, out of love for them, could not refuse the invitation. He went to Karjagi and stayed in a house owned by one Dasappa, a Brahmin who was a victim of all vices. He never uttered the name of God nor did he worship a saint. Even when the Dasa was staying in his house which he had given out of courtesy and request of the town people, he did not see the Dasa and did not even express a desire to talk to him. Dasappa's wife, a neglected Hindu lady, took courage to tell her husband to seek

the blessings of the Dasa at least for a few minutes. It somehow appealed to Dasappa who stayed for the pooja when Jagannath Dasa's disciple, Pranesh Dasa, recited a poem specially composed for the occasion. He abused Dasappa and said: "All these years you neglected your protector, followed the path of vice and degradation. Why don't you, at least now, remember Shri Hari? Earn the blessings of Him by leading a life of piety." Jagannath Dasa was pained to hear the open insult; however, it brought about a strange transformation in Dasappa who admitted his sin and expressed a desire to change. He shaved his head, bathed in the holy waters and sat before the Dasa to be initiated into the service of God. Jagannath Dasa realized the changed situation and gave him the discipleship. Dasappa obtained the signet sign of "Shri Da Vitthal" and became a fully initiated Dasa, popularly known as Karjagi Dasa. Shri Da Vitthal wrote a number of songs in praise of Vitthal, the great saints like Shri Raghavendra Swamy and, finally, his Guru, Jagannath Dasa.

The most important event in Jagannath Dasa's itinerary was his visit to Mysore twice. Once he was invited by one Venkata Subbaiah who was a police officer under the reign of Tippu Sultan. The Dasa's "Keertanas" were very well attended and the fame spread to Poornaiah who was Tippu's Diwan. Venkata wanted the Diwan to attend the Keertana but could not succeed because the Pandits who detested the Dasas did not allow Poornaiah to attend it. Also, Poornaiah thought he could go to a Keertana after dinner, as he did any music programme. He equated the Keertana with a cheap secular music programme. One day he did go to Venkat's house at 9.30 in the night thinking that he would enjoy the songs. Jagannath Dasa after finishing the Keertana was resting. Venkata was in real trouble — should he displease the Diwan or wake up Jagannath Dasa and invite curses. In this predicament, which Poornaiah fortunately understood, Venkata woke up the Dasa and said; "Sir, my master has come. Can you do me a favour by singing to him a few praises of the Lord?" "My Master is fast asleep," replied the Dasa, "ask your master to come when my Master is awake." Poornaiah understood the delicate situation and went home thinking that he could make it some other time. Jagannath Dasa had only one Master, Shri Hari. Keertana was not a cheap entertainment;

it was a process of reaching the Lord through song and dance. The Dasas were seers, not street-singers. So, Jagannath Dasa did not bother about Poornaiah or any other master.

The second visit to Mysore came after many years and after a radical change in the administration of the State. Tippu was killed in the battle, the old Hindu Maharaja was restored the kingdom and Poornaiah again took over the reins of government. During Jagannath Dasa's visit, his Keertanas were arranged in the palace where the queen mother and the women members of the royal family appreciated them. But Poornaiah himself was extremely busy with the administrative work and had hardly any time to spend with the Dasa. Once he decided to spare some time to invite Jagannath Dasa to lunch and to honour him with appropriate gifts. But his Pandits did not relish the idea of inviting the Dasa. They said: "The Dasa is a hybrid — neither a Sanyasi nor a Pandit priest. He is innocent of Sanskrit learning and of the Vedas and the Upanishads. How can he discuss Shastras and the subtle points contained in them? It is therefore below our dignity — and yours, too — to sit for lunch with him." "How, then," said Poornaiah, "shall we tackle the problem? We have to invite him and, at the same time, not lose our prestige." After some discussion a clever Pandit suggested that, since on the "Ekadashi" day (fasting day), there was no lunch they should invite Jagannath Dasa to perform Keertana. All agreed to the brilliant proposal. The question of gift was then discussed. Poornaiah said that he wanted to give a hundred gold coins and a shawl and some gold ornaments because the Dasa was really great. All the Pandits laughed heartily at the idea. "Are you joking, Sir?" they asked Poornaiah. "The beggarly Dasa should get a torn piece of cloth. Does he deserve a shawl, a hundred coins and gold?" The cunningest Pandit suggested that the Dasa be given a coarse woollen cloth from Mandya and five gold coins. Most reluctantly Poornaiah agreed and invited the Dasa.

People play with fire knowing fully well that it has the power to destroy them. Without realizing the greatness of a person, people ask silly questions more to satisfy their ego and expose their foolishness than to understand the great scholar. It was like asking Pandit Bhaskaracharya the sum of two and two. The foolish Pandits did not comprehend the unlimited powers, intel-

lect and devotion of Jagannath Dasa. They, with their limited understanding brought about by bigotry, took the great Dasa to be a street singer fit to treat with scorn. Jagannath, an omniscient devotee, knew the plan of the Pandits and wanted to teach them a lesson to reform them and remove their ignorance. When the Dasa was preparing to start the Keertana the Pandits, to show off, discussed the meaning of a particular Shastric sentence. Another made it even more complicated. The third joined to create further confusion. Poornaiah requested Jagannath Dasa to begin the prayers and the Keertana. The Dasa began the prayers and then sang the song composed by Purandara Dasa. The song was:

पिंडांडदोळगिह। गंडन काणदे  
मुंडेयरादरु ई। पंडितरेल्ल।।

*(Not understanding the lord of all life, the lord of the essence of the world, the Pandits have become a symbol of shorn head — like widows)*

The Pandits were very angry because they were directly attacked. Poornaiah, who enjoyed the criticism, asked the Pandits to listen to the Dasa carefully. Jagannath Dasa explained every word with the support of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Shastras. Then he sang Gopala Dasa's famous song —

शान्तिबिडदो भाग्यपुरुष्यने। दुर्विषयवमरेदु  
शान्तचित्त नागुवतनक। ए प्राणिनिन्न

*(You, despicable creature, until you give up your evil thoughts and concentrate on the greatness of the Lord, you cannot destroy your madness and earn peace and meditative disposal.)*

Gopala Dasa details how to be humble and how to remain a servant of Shri Hari. "Worship the Lord," says the Dasa "using all the parts of your body. Worship every moment of your life." Jagannath Dasa again extensively quoted Brahmasutra, Tatva

Prakashika and other wellknown books and commentaries. The Pandits were put to shame and became humble devotees of the Dasa. When the gift was to be given Poornaiah brought a thousand gold pieces and a shawl. Jagannath Dasa did not accept the offering. He said: "Sir, I don't deserve these. I am neither a Sanyasi nor a Pandit. Why give me a thousand gold pieces and a good shawl. All I deserve is a gift of coarse woollen cloth of Mandya and five rupees." Poornaiah was taken aback at the clairvoyant reading and prostrated before Jagannath Dasa. The Dasa still would not accept the rich gift. After repeated, humble obeisance the Dasa accepted it and said: "This is not mine. This belongs to Shri Raghavendra Swamy and my Gurus Vijaya Dasa and Gopala Dasa." Poornaiah became a humble disciple. The Pandits sat with sad humiliated faces. Mere bookish knowledge lifts people nowhere but to ego and false prestige. With humility and real knowledge of the soul, the Lord will lead a person to the path of piety.

After the visit to Mysore, Jagannath Dasa settled at Manavi and did not undertake any journey. He devoted a major portion of his time to writing. He was nearly eighty. He started writing the magnum opus, *Harikathamrutasara*, when he was very old and physically weak. His hands used to tremble, his eyebrows now become loose expanded skin were covering his eyes, the entire body was emaciated. The Dasa's disciples used to lift the loose skin of the eyebrow and trembling hand was steadied. "Why, Sir, are you writing in this condition?" asked Jagannath's disciples. "Why don't you rest? You are eighty. You have already done your work." Jagannath Dasa smiled at the disciples. Most lovingly he said: "Dear friend, do you think I am writing this? Lord, because of His intention to spread the knowledge of His creation and because He wants to bless all souls, has been Himself writing through me. The Lord is putting the words in my mind and moving my hands to write. I have to obey Shri Hari's dictates." The words satisfied the disciples. The Dasa wrote the great work to propagate Dvaita Siddhanta and the greatness of God. *Harikathamruta Sara* is recited in every house and is listened to with reverence. After completing the work the Dasa found that the ordained period of worldly existence had come to a close.

Jagannath Dasa was now eightytwo; the years transferred to



him by Gopala Dasa were over. So, he was preparing himself to bid good-bye to the world. On the appointed day, when the Dasa thought he had to die, he engaged himself in prayers and gifted his worldly possessions to the deserving people. He fed the scholars and the poor. He himself started meditating. He had engaged himself in the final earthly worship of the Lord. Suddenly, everything stopped, the Dasa's head exploded and the great servant of God was totally merged with the creation of God. The Dasa's stringed instrument rested on his lap, a smile appeared on his face but the usual life — the physical possession of all — had disappeared. This happened on 17th of September 1809. Even today the pillar that gave support to Jagannath is worshipped. The Dasa's songs are on every lip. The Dasa has been living eternally.

## THE WRITER, JAGANNATH DASA

Purandara Dasa was an astute businessman and a learned man. It is proved beyond doubt that he was well-versed in Sanskrit, the Upanishads and Kannada. Though he made use of many Sanskrit books and writings his forte was Kannada and he wrote songs in the language of the common man. In fact, the work of the Dasa Kuta was achieved in the area of the regional languages for the sole purpose of conveying the mystic and philosophical ideas to the man in the street. The Dasas, therefore, invited the ridicule of Pandits and Sanskrit scholars because they, like all learned people, thought that the Dasas did not know the original Sanskrit writings. It is almost like the English writers who wrote in English and were dubbed as ignorant people because they knew little Latin and no Greek. Even the great pontiffs of the many Maths sometimes did not respect them. Only the wise among them knew the greatness of the Dasas and revered them. Vyasaraaya placed Kanaka Dasa and Purandara Dasa above all Pandits. But some of the Sanyasis took time to understand the great seers that the Dasas were.

Among the Dasas there were many who did not have formal training in either Sanskrit or Kannada. They did not attend any school conducted by the princely rulers or by the Maths. These Dasas were seers, great thinkers and ardent devotees of God. They understood the Dvaita philosophy in a general way but were not profound in the commentaries or exposition. Bhakti was their cult. They could not follow the path of knowledge (ज्ञानमार्ग) to reach Godhead. Life taught them many lessons which they preached. Dasas like Vijaya Dasa, Gopala Dasa, Dasappa (Karjagi Dasa) and a host of others were great thinkers and seers. Their Kannada was the simple unalloyed language of the masses. Yet, they were averse to using Sanskrit. Therefore, they could not write a profound book like *Harikathamruta Sara* which

delineates all the subtle aspects of Dvaitism. Probably, Jagannath Dasa was reborn, after his brief death, to achieve the great goal which no other Dasa did before him.

Jagannath Dasa was eminently qualified for the job. The writing of a celestial song on Lord Hari was no small achievement. It required an excellent background of Sanskrit, Indian philosophy and Dvaita Siddhanta. Jagannath Dasa was trained personally by no less a renowned scholar than Varadendra Teerth and was allowed to participate in the discourses. He read the commentaries on the writings of Madhvacharya by Teekacharya and Swamy Raghavendra Teerth. So, Jagannath Dasa was a research scholar in Sanskrit and philosophy. He had learned the Kannada of the great Kannada writers. His Kannada was polished and was lucid like Chaucer "well of English undefiled." caste and literary. The Dasa, to some extent was a Savyasachi (a wielder of two)—he knew excellent Sanskrit and Kannada—which is a rare combination for a Dasa. Jagannath Dasa's songs are simple but betray literary nuances with the grace of refinement. They need explanation to understand them fully. His writings therefore have to be evaluated in the context of the Dasa's own scholastic training.

Jagannath Dasa while bathing in Pandharpur found the inscribed stone. "Jagannath Vitthal" became his personal signet. The Dasa was already singing the praise of Lord Vitthal even from a distance. He walked so fast to reach Pandharpur that he forgot to eat and drink. The main thought in his mind was "When do I see the Lord?" "When will I bathe in the river, Bhima?" On the way he saluted the river, the singing bards, the groups of devotees. Jagannath Dasa composed:

येदु कांवेनु पांडुरंगमारुतिय।  
 इंदु भाग निवास नरन सारथिय।।  
 अरुणाब्जोपमचारु चरणांगुलिनखर।  
 तरणेंदुछवि तिरस्करिसुव प्रकर।।  
 किरुगेज्जे खडेयानूपुर पैडेशफर।  
 तेरजंधे जानु भास्वर रत्न सुकुर।।१।।

रांभापोलुवऊरु पोंबण्णंबख।  
 कुंभी मस्तकदोल नितंबादि पोळेव॥  
 कंबुमेखळ कंजगंभीर जाभि।  
 अंबुधिशायि विधिशंभु पुजितन॥२॥

लवकुक्षित्रिवळी भार्गविवत्स उद्य।  
 द्रवि पोलुव कौस्तुभ नव वैजयंति॥  
 सुविशाल दृढयदोळ विविध हारगळ।  
 नवनीत चोर श्री पवमानार्चितन॥३॥

पदकसरिगेयु जांबूनद कंबुकंठ।  
 रदनिक रतेरबाहु चदुरभुजकीर्ति॥  
 बदरसंकाश अंगद रत्नकटक।  
 पदुमारुणकरव मध्यदलि इट्टवन॥४॥

विधुबिंबोपम चत्ववदन केंदुटिय।  
 भिदुराभरदन इंगदिरोल्किरुनगेय॥  
 कदपुकन्नडिनासा तुदिचंपकन नेय।  
 उदके जायतनेत्र यदुवंशोभ्दवन॥५॥

कलित कुंडलकर्ण सुलताभ्रयूगळ।  
 ललित बालशशांक तिलकांकितफाल॥  
 अळिजालवेनिष कंतळरत्नखचित।  
 कलधौयतमकुट दिग्बलय बेळगुवन॥६॥

*("When shall I see Panduranga  
The saviour of the man of Bhima river.  
The Lord with the beauty of morning lotus  
The brightness that shames the cool rays of the young  
moon.*

*The jinglets, the bracelets and the shining crown  
The shoulders with the flame of diamonds.  
The thighs like the plantain trunk covered with gold-  
hued cloth*

*The head big like a pot and the blazing seat,  
The navel gorgeous and serene  
Worshipped by Bramha and Mahesha.  
The Vaijayanti garland with the brightness of the rising  
sun*

*Adorning the broad chest  
You, the butter thief are adored by Maruti.  
You wear the beautiful bracelets and coloured ornaments  
That cover your shoulders and hands.  
You have tied a jewel belt of extraordinary rays.  
The red lips that display a mild smile,  
Your lotus-graceful eyes attract the devotees, oh, the  
son of Yadu.  
The ears expose rings, the eyebrows add beauty to your  
face.*

*The forehead wears a mark of red tilak  
To top it all the Lord wears a crown fresh and washed.")*

Singing the newly composed prayer Jagannath Dasa reached Pandharpur and worshipped Vitthal every day. He used to recite his prayer every day but had not given to it his signet because he had none. The day the Dasa got the stone, he was overjoyed and completed the prayer by adding one more stanza. The ending is :

शठकूर्मरपिय किटमानवहरिय।  
वटुभारविकाकुस्थ शठकंस द्विषन।।  
निटलांबक सहाय खळकटकारि भीमा।  
तटवास जगन्नाथ विठल मूरुतिय।।७।।

*[(You, with the incarnation of tortoise,  
A little Vatu (a Brahmachari, a young initiated boy),  
then Parashurama, the enemy of the evil-natured Kansa,  
You are a great help to Mahadeva (a God with an eye in  
the forehead — )*

*(You) live on the bank of the sacred, sin-washing river,  
Bhima. I worship you as your devotee and you are  
Jagannath)]*

This was the very first poem written by Jagannath Dasa. Shrinivasacharya, after initiation, had now become Jagannath Dasa. As Shrinivasacharya, the Dasa had written many poems in Sanskrit. In fact, when he first met his teacher, Varadendra Teerth, he extemporaneously composed the "Varadendra Pancharatna" to extol the greatness of the teacher. Being enamoured of Sanskrit, he detested Kannada calling it a language of the illiterates and preferred to write only in Sanskrit. But now situation changed; the realization dawned on him and made him appreciate the language of the common man. Even here the Dasa uses a number of Sanskrit words — "Charanangulinakhara" "Ambudhi Shayi" etc. Since this was his first composition in Kannada the Dasa had to fall back on his early Sanskrit influence considerably. The student of Jagannath Dasa's writings will certainly notice the change in the later poems. The Dasa switched over to native Kannada words in preference to Sanskrit words. The Dasas had to speak, sing and teach the common people in their language. So, they necessarily had to garnish their Kannada reservoir with adequate local words. The Kannada of the Dasas was based on the spoken language of the common people.

After praying to Vitthala as the initiated Dasa, Jagannath Dasa wrote three poems in praise of Pandhari, Vitthala of Pandharpur. He meditated on the god and inwardly saw the resplendant glory of Vitthala. The first poem is :,

कंडे पंढरिरायन । श्रीमनःप्रियन

followed by पालिसु पंढरिपुरिरेय and धन्यनादे

In all these he followed the tradition laid down by his preceptors, Vijaya Dasa and Gopala Dasa. The songs are outpourings of the soul longing to have presence of God to bless it. The Dasas were the strictest believers in the path of devotion, "Bhakti," to reach the grace of Shri Hari.

Jagannath Dasa wrote a number of songs in praise of saints, gods and teachers. He wrote on Shri Raghavendra Swamy when the Swamy stopped speaking with the Dasa. The Swamy then explained to Jagannath Dasa that he would appear to him when he was alone. However, the Dasa wrote

याके मूकनाद्यो, हे गुरुवे

(Why have you, O Guru, become silent)

These compositions have formed the repertoire of later Dasas and devotees.

The greatest contribution of Jagannath Dasa to literature is his *Harikathamruta Sara*, a philosophic Bible. It is a quintessence of Dvaita philosophy and a definitive book on Madhva Siddhanta. A student of Madhva has necessarily to read the book because he can understand the intricacies of what the great Acharya taught. *Harikathamruta Sara* is a *summum bonum* for all Dvaitins. That such a great writing fructified when Jagannath Dasa was eighty and that he, with sustained efforts, could write thirty-two cantos is a marvel of devotion and the blessings of god. The Dasa, an old man with dim eyes and trembling hand, sat up with a pillar to support his back. This pillar is still maintained as a mark of respect for the Dasa. Only intense devotion and emotional mingling of the individual soul with the Godhead as a servant made the Dasas and other disciples work ignoring physical discomfort. It was such a devotion that prompted the sculptors to carve temples; it was this devotion that brought painters to execute marvellous art. Jagannath Dasa sat for hours writing *Harikathamruta Sara* as a worship of Shri Hari. The book is not only a religious manifesto but also an excellent piece of poetry.

The *magnum opus* of *Harikathamruta Sara* runs into thirtytwo cantos with one final canto added by Shri Da Vitthala, Karajgi Dasappa. Dasappa became an ardent disciple of Jagannath Dasa

and was considered to be the only person fit to write the concluding canto. This canto, known as "Phala Stuti Sandhi" describes the many earthly pleasures and benefits that one gets by reading an intensely religious book like *Harikathamruta Sara*. In a lavishly flattering style Dasappa has pointed out how the poem is a quintessence, a gist of Dvaita Siddhanta. The first thirtytwo cantos are composed by Jagannath Dasa.

One has to understand a brief summary of all the cantos before going deeper into each canto and each interpretation. There have been many commentaries on *Harikathamruta Sara* in Telugu, Kannada and Sanskrit. Even the Kannada commentary was written in Telugu script. The chief commentaries in Kannada are by:

1. Shri Sankarshana Wodeyar's Commentary written in Telugu script.
2. (Modkal Shesharao) Guru Vijaya Vitthal.
3. (Kuntoji Dasa) Guru Shrishha Vitthal.
4. Draupadesha Vitthal.
5. (Jamakhandi Vadirajacharya) Bhavasoochana Commentary.

The Sanskrit commentaries are by Jamkhandi Vadirajacharya (Shri Vyasadasa-Siddhanta Kaumudi) and anonymous writing named Tamraparniya. Many disciples believed that Jagannath Dasa was Salhada, brother of Pralhada, in his previous birth.

The thirtytwo cantos are given titles to indicate the subject-matter. The first chapter called "Mangalacharana," invocation to God, invokes the blessings of gods, saints and gurus in achieving the completion of the book. The other cantos are:

Canto Two: Karuna Sandhi where the poet seeks the compassion of the most benevolent god.

Canto Three: Vyapti Sandhi points out the immense world of the creator and how He lives spread over His creation.



Canto Four: Bhajanarasa Vithaga indicates the collection of the Rasa as in food. God's sentiments are many and the devotee has to seek God's love.

Canto Five: Vibhooti explains the presence of the Lord in different aspects of his creation. He lives in Shaligrama, Tulasi and in the heavenly bodies.

Canto Six: Panchmaha Yajna mentions the fire (a vehicle of sacrifice) in the world in various forms.

Canto Seven: Matraka Sandhi describes the manifestation of the Divine in various people in the world.

Canto Nine: Udatta Anudatta actually mentions the greatness of Shri Hari and how a devotee can understand Him.

Canto Ten: Sarva Prateeka explains God's omnipresence in the creation.

Canto Eleven: Sthavara Jangama points out the forms of worship and discusses the living and the non-living.

Canto Twelve: Nadee Prakarana delineates the different muscular parts and the veins of the body and the manifestation of the divine presence in each small part of the body. The Lord receives the devotee's worship in all forms of the body.

Canto Thirteen: Namasmaraha is devoted to the prayers of God and the protection that the Lord gives for the devotion. One has to utter the prayers while sleeping, while doing one's work and dedicate the entire time and body to the Lord.

Cantos Fourteen and Fifteen — Pitrugana canto indicates the worship of God through one's offering of food to ancestors. The food offered to many ancestors reach them in many ways.

The Shwasa canto continues the discussion in the area of breathing.

Cantos Sixteen and Seventeen: Datta Swatantrya and Svagata Swatantrya explain how man's action is the result of Shri Hari's good wishes. Man depends entirely on the Lord's grace. The Dasa points out the free action of God in relation to man's dependence on the creator.

Canto Eighteen: Sarva Swatantrya relates to the complete independence of the Lord. Without Him the world cannot move. Each creation of God works according to the Lord's orders.

Canto Nineteen: Karma Vimochana points out the duties of man, how he should perform them and how he would be relieved of the duties. If he remembers Shri Hari and does the work enjoined on him, then Man is free from the bonds of duty.

Cantos Twenty and Twentyone: Gunataratamya and Brahat-taratamya explain the relationships existing among the many creations of God. Jagannath Dasa, in an elaborate manner points out the many levels of attainment. In fact, the basic principle of Dvaita philosophy is the "Taratamya Bhava", the acceptance of hierarchy.

Canto Twentytwo: Sakaladuritanivarana is a prayer to God to remove all the worldly obstacles and to bless everyone with a life of dedication. Unqualified surrender to God is a path to God-realization.

Cantos Twentythree, Twentyfour, Twentyfive, Twentysix, Twentyseven: Aparokshataratamya, Bimbapratibimba, Arohanataratamya, Avarohanataratamya, Anukramanika taratamya — All these cantos describe the hierarchy or Taratamya (differentiation) or ranking among the Lord's creation. These are according to Dvaita Siddhanta.

Canto Twentyeight: Vighneshwara Stotra prays to Ganapati for his blessings. In fact this should have come as the first canto. But Jagannath Dasa inserts this in between the Taratamya cantos.

Cantos Twentynine, Thirty: Anutaratamya and Daitya Taratamya once again relate to the principle of differentiation.

Canto Thirtyone: Naivedya Samarpana is an offering to God. The Dasa describes in detail how one has to offer the devotion in the form of meditation and food and flowers.

Canto Thirtytwo: Kakshataratamya again is a prayer in the name of all Gods. This is the last canto and repeats the supremacy of Shri Hari. Hari, Laxmi, Vayu and all gods have been invoked for blessings.

Canto Thirtythree: Phalashruti Sandhi or the benediction was written by Jagannath Dasa's disciple, Shri Da Vitthala or Karjagi Dasa. In fact, when alive, Jagannath Dasa wanted a deserving disciple to complete the *Harikathamruta Sara*. When Dasappa of Karjagi realized his former folly and became an ardent disciple of Jagannath Dasa, he (Dasappa) was assigned the task of completing the famous poem.

The thirtythird Canto explains the benefits of reciting the divine poem and of concentrating on God.

*Harika'hamruta Sara* is a grand poem extending to thirtytwo cantos and is written in a highly literary style. Jagannath Dasa, like Milton, wants to emphasize the ways of God to man. Madhvacharya's Dvaita philosophy was explained to people in many writings by Sanyasis and attracted studies and researches. Jayateerth, Vyasaraya and Raghavendra Swamy wrote many commentaries. Dvaita philosophy was carried to the common man in Kannada by the Dasas such as Purandara Dasa, Vijaya Dasa and Gopala Dasa. But no one actually immersed himself in Sanskrit studies to understand the subtleties of philosophy

and then to explain them in literary Kannada. The purpose of the earlier Dasas was to spread Dvaita to the layman. But by now the layman was educated and wanted to learn more about Dvaita. Additionally, the Dasas, because of their scant training in Sanskrit, were not respected by Pandits. It was Jagannath Dasa who alone could bridge the gulf between Sanskrit learning and Kannada writing for the benefit of the common people.

The summary of the cantos indicates the wide range of the Dasa's study and covers every aspect of Madhva philosophy. The poem is written in "Bhamini Shatpadi" and is well-suited for musical rendering. Of significance is Jagannath Dasa's constant references to arithmetic figures like "आरुमूरेरडोंदुसाविर" (six, three, two and one thousand = twentyone,  $6 \times 3 = 18 + 2 + 1$ ) to exactly indicate the number of years of penance, of parts of the body, of creations of God—to quantify the statements. Similarly, the hierarchy in the Lord's creation is so well defined that the reader understands the level of differences.

*Harikathamruta Sara* poetizes "Bhakti" (devotion, surrender to God) in a lucid manner. A devotee must understand that he cannot realize the presence of God unless he surrenders himself to the Lord. In the seventeenth stanza in the tenth canto the Dasa says:

एनु केळिदरेनु नोडिद।  
 रेनु ओडिद रेनु पेळिद।  
 रेनु पाडिद रेनु माडिद रेनु दिनदिनदि।।  
 श्रीनिवासन जन्मकर्मस।  
 द्वा नुरागंदि नेनेदु तत्त।  
 त्स्थानदलि तद्रूप तन्नामकन स्मरिसदव।।

*(What use is it if one read, heard or studied? Unless one immerses oneself in Shri Hari's meditation, nothing is achieved.)*

God is all-pervasive yet mysteriously unknown. He is there; yet not there. Fire exists inwardly, latently in wood, coal and any combustible matter. But that fire does not present itself outwardly. In a beautiful account Jagannath Dasa writes:

परिमळवु सुमनदोल गनलनु।  
 अरणियोळ गिप्पंते दामो।  
 दरनु ब्रह्मादिगळ मनदलि तोरितोरदले।।  
 इरुतिह जगन्नाथ विठ्ठलन।  
 करुण पडेव नुमुक्षुजीवरु।  
 परम भागवत रनु कोंडाडुवुदु प्रतिदिनवु।।

(Canto I Stanza 13)

*(Like fragrance in flower, like fire in wood, Lord Damodara lives as if not present in all His creations. So, those who aspire for salvation should worship Jagannath Vitthala.)*

That God is omnipresent and manifests Himself everywhere provided the devotee has a humble approach is stressed in many stanzas.

ओब्बनलि निंताडुवनु म।  
 तोब्बनलि नोडुवनु बेडुव।  
 नोब्बनलि नीडु वनु माताडुवनु बेरगागि।।

(Canto II Stanza 9)

*(He, Shri Hari, plays in the form of one, He sees through the second one, He asks through the third and looks surprised through another.)*

The idea of the Lord's existence in His creation is emphasized in the Geeta. Jagannath Dasa mentions the concept of omniscience and omnipresence in a major portion of *Harikathamruta Sara*.

Jagannath Dasa does not believe in rituals and false devotionless worship. In fact, these ideas have been expressed by all

saints and Dasas. It is absolutely futile to fall at the feet of the Lord and to utter the prayers without devotion. The Dasa says:

स्नान जप देवार्चनेय व्या।  
 ख्यान भारतमुख महोपपु।  
 राण कथेगळ पेळी केळिदरेनु दिनदिनदि।।  
 ज्ञानकर्मेदियगळिंदेड।  
 नेS नु माडुव कर्मगळु ल।  
 क्ष्मीनिवासन पूजेयेंदरिपिसद मानवनु।।६।।

(Canto XIII Stanza 6)

*(What is the good of a bath, a reading of the Lord's story, and a lecture on the books. If the action performed is not dedicated to the Lord (Laxmi Niwas) it is totally useless.)*

The *Harikathamruta Sara* stresses the need to totally surrender oneself to Shri Hari. The Lord should be remembered all the twentyfour hours of the day. He should be prayed when asleep and when awake. The entire scheme of man should be oriented to the Lord's service and remembrance. In return the Lord takes the utmost care of the devotee. He becomes the servant of servants to protect the devotee.

मक्कळडिसुवाग मडदियो।  
 लक्करादि नलिवाग हय प।  
 ल्लक्कि गज मोदलाद वाहनगळेSरि मेरे वाग।।  
 बिक्कवाग आकळीसुतलि दे।  
 वक्कितनयन नेनवुतिह नर।  
 सिक्कनु यमदूतरिगे आवावल्ली नोडिरु।।१।।

(Canto XIII, Stanza 1)

*(When one is playing with children, when sweetly talking to his wife while riding a horse or a palanquin, while*

*yawning or hiccupping, if the devotee remembers Lord Krishna, the God of Death (Yama) will find it difficult to search him.)*

मलगुवागलि एकुवागील।  
कुलितु माताडुवागलि मनेयोळु।  
केलसगळ मांडुतलि मैदोळेवाग मेलुवाग।।  
कलषदरन सकलछविलि।  
तिळिये तत्तन्नामरपव।  
बळियलिप्पनु वोंदरक्षण बिट्टुगलनवर।।३।।

(Canto XIII Stanza No- 3)

*(While sleeping, getting up, while talking, bathing and when engaged in the daily chores if one remembers the remover of sins, then he will be served like a slave by the Lord.)*

Jagannath Dasa justifies even simple or casual devotion to Lord Shri Hari. The smallest worship is bound to reward the devotee with the largest dividend. In this regard God has no preferences nor prejudices. Irrespective of the devotee's status the Lord blesses him with favours.

In Canto thirteen, Stanza 4 Jagannath Dasa says:

आवकुल द्रव नादरोनि।  
न्नाव देशदोळिदरेनि।  
न्नाव कर्मव माडलेनिन्नाव कालदलि।।  
श्रीवरन सर्वत्रदलि सं।  
भाविसुत पजिसुत मोदिप।  
कोविदरिंगुटेनो भयदुःखादि द्वंद्वगळु।।४।।

*(Let him belong to any caste, let him come from any country, let him follow any profession, if he worships Shrinivasa, He will accept him.)*

God is benevolent, merciful and understanding. He is interested in bringing to His devotees the maximum amount of happiness and solace. The devotee has to acknowledge the supremacy of the Lord. So, Jagannath Dasa enjoins on all human beings to worship the Lord to obtain His blessings. "Worship the image of Shri Hari," he says. Of course, to attain the worshipping state of mind, one has to give up greed, selfishness and ego. The Dasa says:

ओरटुबुद्धिय बिहु लौकिक।  
हरटेगळ नीडाडी कांचन।  
परटिलोष्टादिगळु समवेंदरितु नित्यदलि।।

*(Give up arrogance and talks of the worldly benefits.  
Shun your greed for gold, wealth and power.)*

The ego is nothing but a misjudged bravado. "It is," says the Dasa, "like fighting a battle with a needle." सूजि करदलि पिडिदु  
समरव ना जयिमुवेनु एबं नरनंते ।

(Canto XIV Stanza 16.)

Speaking about the humility of the Lord for the benefit of His devotee, the Dasa says:

मलगि परमादरादि पाडलु।  
कळितु केळव कळितु पाडलु।  
निलुव नितरे नलिव नलिदरे ओलिये निमगेंब।।  
सुलभनो हरि तन्नवरनर।  
घळिगे बिट्टगलनु रमाधव।  
नोलिसलरियदे पामररु बळलुवरु भवदोळगे।।५।।

*(If the devotee sleeps and worships, the Lord sits to listen to him; He will stand up when the devotee sits;*



*if the devotee stands, He will dance and sing. It is very easy to obtain the grace of Shri Hari.)*

There are a number of examples of the justification of the all-pervasiveness of the Lord. Man has to understand the dignity and the greatness of God. Jagannath Dasa has taken upon himself the onerous responsibility of praising the Lord and of explaining the supremacy of the Dvaita philosophy. In the epilogue the Dasa of Karjagi has succinctly summarized the importance of *Harikathamruta Sara*. He says:

साखेंदरे हरिकथामृत।  
 साखेंबुवुदेम्म गुरुवर।  
 सारिदल्लदे तिळियेंदेनुत महेंद्रनंदन॥  
 सारथिय बलगोंड सारा।  
 सारगळ निणैसि पेळदन।  
 सार नडेव महात्मरिगे संसारवेल्लिहुदो॥३॥

(Canto XXXIII Stanza 3)

*(This is the essence of the religious principles. This is a praise of the charioteer of Arjuna.)*

Jagannath Dasa's poem celestial encompasses the great Indian philosophic writings of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Geeta. The principles of man-god relationship enunciated in Brahma Sutra are also lucidly explained. Dvaita tatva (principles) was firmly established by Madhvacharya, the doyen of Dvaita Siddhanta. Jagannath Dasa, in his *Harikathamruta Sara*, repeatedly states that Shri Hari is not easily "seeable", is beyond the reach of even the greatest Yogis. Yet, by sheer piety, self-surrender and devotion, He can be "seen" and His blessings cherished. The poem, as pointed out by Dasappa (Karjagi Dasa), contains the beauties of religion, philosophy and literature. There are the nine Rasas :

हरिकथामृतसार नवरस।  
 भरित बहुगंभीर रत्ना।  
 कर रुचिर श्रृंगार सालंकार विस्तार।।  
 सरस नरकंठीरवाचा।  
 यर जनित सुकुमार सात्वी।  
 करिगे परमोदारमाडिद मरेयदुपकार।।१४।।

(Canto XXXIII, Stanza 14)

*(Harikathamruta Sara contains the nine Rasas and is tastefully extensive like the sea. Jagannath Dasa, by offering this poem, has rendered an unredeemable service to people.)*

The greatness of the poem lies in stressing again and again the fact that Lord Shri Hari is obtainable by all. No sect, no amount of sin committed, no ignorance, no great learning, no previous vices will prevent a devotee from reaching God and making his life awakened, refined and holy.

दुष्टरेन्नदे दुविषयदिं।  
 पुष्टरेन्नदे पूतकर्म।  
 भ्रष्टरेन्नदे श्रीदविट्टल वेणुगोपाल।।  
 कष्टकैपिडियुवन सत्यवि।  
 शिष्टदासत्वन पालिसि।  
 निष्ठेयिंदलि हरिकथामृतसार पठिसुवर।।२४।।

(Canto XXXIII, Stanza 24)

*(The Lord does not discriminate against the wicked, the people deep in worldly luxuries, the sinful and the fallen, He will hold his helping hand to lift the people that read Harikathamruta Sara with love, respect and devotion.)*

Many are the beauties of the poem. Jagannath Dasa has rendered a great service to people by writing a literary philosophic compendium in *Harikathamruta Sara*. The more one reads it, the more one redeems oneself from vice, avarice and ignorance.

## THE EPILOGUE

*Harikathamruta Sara* is indeed Jagannath Dasa's swan song. The eighty years' experience of the great savant is concretized in the poem. The life of dedication to Shri Hari is exemplified in the learned thesis on Dvaita Siddhanta. Jagannath Dasa is, however, not as famous as Purandara Dasa because of his scholarly approach to Dvaitism and of his emphasis more on philosophy than on social reform. Purandara Dasa was the first among the Dasas both in the extensive service he rendered and in the amount of voluminous writings. More than a lakh of songs have been attributed to him.

Jagannath Dasa belonged to the literary-philosophical period of the Dasa history. He was not basically interested in reformation as that work was already achieved by his predecessors and contemporaries. Also, Jagannath Dasa was a scholar by temperament both by training and environment. The story of his acceptance of Dasahood is already narrated. He is therefore read by two classes of people. The devout Madhvas find in Jagannath Dasa's writings a restatement in Kannada of the great Acharya's preachings. The second category of readers belongs to devotees with literary interest. Jagannath Dasa's poems are wrought in chaste Kannada though they use the simple colloquial expressions. Even though *Harikathamruta Sara* is written in modern Kannada, still it requires the aid of commentators. But the poem is on the lips of every old Madhva who fully enjoys the infinite beauties of the poem.

Jagannath Dasa is a great writer and has left an indelible mark on the community. The posterity is grateful to the Dasa for the stupendous task he has achieved. One can rightly call him a poet's poet, a Dasa's Dasa.

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# JAGANNATH DASA

## HIS LIFE AND WORKS

Very few books have been written on the most fascinating life of Shri Jagannath Dasa who gave to the Dasa Literature, *Harikathamruta Sara*, a mine of literature and philosophy, Barring a thesis in Kannada on the great Dasa, books in English on Jagannath Dasa are difficult to come by.

The author, a devout student of the Dasas, has taken up the writing "Jagannath Dasa" more as an emotional and spiritual fulfilment than as a dry-as-dust intellectual pursuit. The Introduction reveals the author's involvement in listening to the keertanas of the Dasas and in obtaining rewarding and eternal solace from the utterances of the great Dasas. He therefore thinks it appropriate and compelling to share his ambrosial experiences with other devotees. He has written about the Dasa in a spirit of dedication.

This book is a bird's-eye view of the Dasas of Karnatak, their heritage, philosophy and their objectives. A brief reference is made to the Dasa Kuta and the Vyasa Kuta.

Jagannath Dasa, deals briefly with the works of the Dasa. The literary, philosophical and human qualities of the writings have been examined. Greater emphasis is laid on the magnum opus, *Harikathamruta Sara*. Relevant quotations with translations and comments have been included.

**Dr. Keshav M. Mutalik** retired as Principal, Sydenham College of Commerce and Economics, Bombay. He is one of the few scholars who earned two Ph.D's — the first on Francis William Bain from the University of Bombay and the second on A Sociolinguistic Study of Kannada from Leeds University. Dr. Mutalik has established himself as a distinguished teacher, researcher and a connoisseur of drama and music.

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